

Philo of Alexandria



MaryElizabeth Royce
She/Her/Hers

Who?

- Born in Alexandria Egypt in 20BCE
- Life and writings - evidence for late Second Temple Judaism ideologies and practices.
- Provided influential commentary on scriptures and Jewish Law.
 - Notably Genesis and Exodus
- Examined moral values and philosophical connections within the Law and Torah.

What?

- ~75 Treatises
 - only 52 are extant.
- Writings
 - Exegetical
 - Philosophical
 - Apologetic/Allegorical

Exegetical: a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, specifically a religious text.

- Jewish, Hellenistic, Roman, and Palestinian influences.
- Important source for late Second Temple Judaism.

Exegetical Works

Retellings with a philosophical lens to express an interpretation of the Law and Torah.

- *On the Life of Moses*
 - Law is embodied throughout history.
- *On the Life of Abraham*
 - Moses and Abraham are the ideal men who lead ideal lives.
- *On the Decalogue*
 - Summation of the Laws held within the Ten Commandments.
- *Exposition of the Laws*
 - Retelling of the Pentateuch with explanations of key events, characters, and teachings

Philosophical Works

- *Questions and Answers*
 - Offers critical problems and solutions that are found within the biblical text.
 - Fragmented.
- *Every Good Man is Free*
 - Only the wise man can be truly free.

Philo mainly used the Septuagint as his referencing text.

- Comparison for modern and ancient literary practices and understandings.
- Greek translation and Greek analyses.

Allegorical Works

Searches for a deeper, allegorical meaning behind what is written on the page.

Logos - “reason” - Soul could ascend from a material world to a celestial realm through *logos*.

- *Allegorical Interpretation*
 - Dense and most complex piece of literature.
 - Genesis and Exodus close-text analysis.
 - Characters are personifications of human elements.
 - References Homer and Hesiod.

Works Cited

“Philo of Alexandria.” in *T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism vol. I*. Edited by Daniel Gurtner & Loren Stuckenbruck. 431-435. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Satran, David. “Philo of Alexandria.” In *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, 2nd ed., 714-717. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Brittanica. “Philo Judeus.” Image.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Philo-Judaeus/Originality-of-his-thought>

